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# Combination bookstores, cafes catching readers' eyes

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**A**fter two sessions in a classroom at South Shore Vocational Technical High School in Hanover where they teach, members of a book-discussion group tried something different last month — they met at a bookstore-cafe in Norwell.

At the eight-month-old Book & Brew, the six members sat for hours, talking about their readings and sipping coffee. When they adjourned, everyone in the group bought a copy of James McBride's "The Color of Water" for the next meeting in February at their new-found home.

Like other readers in the south suburbs, the Hanover teachers discovered that books and specialty coffees served in a cafe setting are a beguiling combination that makes folks want to return.

"It's so conducive to staying longer," said Natalie May of Marshfield, a member of the teachers' group.

Getting patrons to stay longer and keeping them coming back is exactly why a growing number of bookstores and libraries in the region are turning to the book-and-coffee experience.

In April, when Tracy Horrigan and Laura Barnes opened the Book & Brew, they fashioned their store after small bookstores they had visited out West, where books and coffee have been a winning combination for more than 10 years.

"We're not trying to emulate the superstores," said Horrigan. "We're trying to emulate something that

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ANN MCLAUGHLIN,  
Quincy library director

# Cafe trend at bookstores appeals to readers' tastes

## ■ CAFES

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hasn't really hit the East Coast yet and we're trying to get in on the early fringe of that."

In addition to Book & Brew, other small bookstores that offer coffee include Book and Bean in Plymouth and Heritage House in Brockton. Local outlets of the larger chain stores — Barnes & Noble and Borders Books and cafe, both in Braintree, — also use cafes to create a comfortable experience where patrons can leaf through books and magazines before deciding to purchase them. In Milton, Duxbury, and Quincy, the public libraries are looking to cafes to help promote good will toward the libraries and build reader loyalty and support.

A cafe is included in the plans for the new addition to the Thomas Crane Public Library in Quincy. The two-year construction project is set to begin next April.

"I think it makes a lot of sense to have a cafe in the library," said Ann McLaughlin, library director. "I think that the bookstores understand very well what people like, to have people go and sit and relax and chat. ... I think that libraries can learn from that."

Like McLaughlin, Duxbury's library director also thinks libraries should follow the bookstores' lead and use books and coffee as a draw. Like the bookstores they are emulating, the library directors want their patrons to feel good about coming to their facility, using the resources, lingering, and joining with others who share similar interests.

"I've been particularly interested in how the megastores market and merchandise, which is something libraries have failed to do," said Joanne Lamothe, director of the Duxbury Free Public Library. French Memories, a local bakery, opened a cafe in the new library last



GLOBE PHOTO / KERRY BRETT

Tracy Horrigan (above) and Laura Barnes are combining coffee and literature at their bookstore, Book & Brew, in Norwell.

Friday.

"The idea is to let the community know about the services the library can offer. Then it becomes a more vital, important place," Lamothe said. "It's marketing what our services are."

Others hope that adding the cafe element will help change the outdated image of libraries as austere places.

"A lot of libraries have not been viewed as warm and fuzzy places," said Roberta Clarke, associate professor of marketing at Boston University School of Management. "If you were brought as a kid, you were shushed up. You carry that feeling with you as you get older, unless you spend a lot of time in the library after you are a child ... the general sense of a library that people have is not as a comfortable place to be. Why not make it more comfortable so more people will stick around and read?"

"We have to portray the library

as a cultural center and an intellectual center," said Marjorie Jeffries, who started the Milton Public Library's Sunday afternoon cafe earlier this year; closed for the holidays, it reopens this afternoon. Two years ago she led an unsuccessful bid for a new library in town.

"I hope that by attracting people to the library who don't normally use it as a resource center, perhaps these people will see this building ... we need more space," she said. While she maintains that the cafe is not part of a hard sell for library expansion, she adds, "I don't think it hurts for people to come to the library."

For local libraries and bookstores that want to be perceived as friendly places, the book-and-coffee route is becoming an increasingly popular approach.

"I do not think this trend has peaked," said Clarke. "At this point, it's becoming almost a competitive necessity."